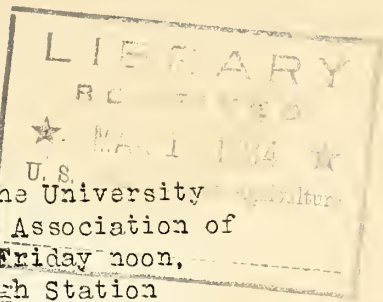


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A SANE CONSERVATION POLICY

Radio talk by Dr. Raymond A. Pearson, President of the University of Maryland, and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities - Farm and Home Hour, Friday noon, January 26, 1934 - The National Broadcasting Company, through Station W.M.A.L., Washington, D. C., and 57 other associate NBC stations.



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It is a discouraging fact that so few people realize the great extent of our natural resources and the great rate at which they have been and still are being used and wasted. There has been more waste than use. Secretary Wallace talked about this matter two weeks ago. Reverend Bradley called attention to the ethical and spiritual phases of the question last Friday. I am invited to say something today about "A Sane Conservation Policy". Such a policy can be briefly stated: It would permit the use of natural resources for the benefit of the present generation, and it would require a minimum of waste, for the benefit of future generations. And such a policy never will come until there is a public consciousness on the subject. Frank Mullen and the National Broadcasting Company deserve much credit for initiating and conducting this series of weekly radio talks, nation-wide, and mostly to be given by well-known specialists. These talks will help to arouse the public. They will be instructive and undoubtedly they will increase the desire to learn about our resources and how the resources may be conserved.

What do you think should be done to change our national spirit in this matter? Can you find any explanation for the condition that would allow natural gas to burn like a great geyser of flame for weeks and months and without doing a bit of good to anyone. Our descendants will call it an unforgivable crime. They have been robbed of a heritage that they should have a right to claim. Have you ever heard persons boast of their success in creating or acquiring wealth, as though they had done it all by themselves and could do it again if they wanted to, and without a mention or even a thought to the resources which they had to use and got so freely.

A national policy must include education. It must be widespread. Perhaps laws or taxes, or exemptions from taxes, or licenses, or other devices will be helpful, but one thing is certain: Education is essential and by itself will go a long way, and without it no plan can succeed. This needs to be brought home to more of our schools, colleges and universities. Some of them already are interested. Young people as well as adults should learn the value and great importance of our resources. Recently we have read about some big auction sales in New York and Chicago. Certain articles were described as almost priceless. Let us think of a different kind of auction sale and imagine that what is sold can be delivered and paid for. What would other nations of the world bid for all the coal underground in Pennsylvania? Or what do you think they would be willing to pay for all the plant food in the rich, black soil of the Mississippi Valley? I can almost hear the bids being called in all languages and jumping a billion at a time. Or what would they pay for all the timber on the Pacific Coast. And let us go the limit... What do you think we could get for all the minerals, coal, oil, gas, plant food, water resources, fish and game that a generous Providence has given to us?

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No, there will be no such auction sale, but I wish we could hear a few bids once in a while just to remind us of what others think of the value of our possessions and help us appreciate what we are worth in respect to these physical advantages.

A national conservation policy should include education as to the value of our resources and as to their vital importance. It should include also liberal provisions for research. Not to do this is like saving at the spigot and wasting at the bung hole. For example, we ought to find ways to make our present fuel more efficient, - two, three, ten times as efficient as it is now, and ways to transport energy with less waste. We ought to find a practical way to use surplus food and other organic matter instead of allowing a 100 percent waste, as we are doing now on such a large scale. It may become possible and practical to manufacture alcohol for fuel from these organic substances, and thus secure a return on the raw materials and at the same time save some gasoline.

We should continue studying the tides and winds and the sun's rays in the hope of finding new and endless energy for all purposes. We must learn much more about our good soils and about animal and plant diseases and pests, because true conservation will protect farmers against losing the profits from their work.

President Roosevelt is known to favor the purchase of large areas of poor producing land so as to change it from farming to more appropriate uses. This appeals to many people. For instance, we ought to take back some of the land that has been homesteaded and from which a decent living for a family cannot be and never could have been extracted. The settlers on such Government land have been imposed upon. They were allowed to think the land would be productive. They believed they would be benefitted in a deal with Uncle Sam. They have been disillusioned. We ought to take these mistakes off their hands and pay them enough to go back where they came from and make a new start. Taking up lands that are too poor for farming and changing them to forest, grazing and park purposes means further studies of soil utilization, and these should be liberally provided for.

When lands are used properly there will be an enormous reduction of losses from erosion, so this matter affects our rivers, too. And the rivers should be protected against pollution as well as erosion. These things influence the beauty of the landscape and the public health as well as the supply of fish food.

As we think of it and talk of it, does it not seem clear that the development of a sane policy as to conservation is another one of the greatest questions before our nation?

Who will lead in forming a positive and effective conservation policy? It will not be surprising if the organized women of the nation will exert themselves as never before in the cause. If they do, something will happen and it will be good. Undoubtedly the press would cooperate; leading newspapers often have shown their interest. But the responsibility is on all of us. If we can't be leaders, we must be good followers. We must be more interested, better informed and willing and anxious to help.